DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 357 296 CG 024 846

AUTHOR Lang, Gina M.; And Others
TITLE African-American Interpersonal Relationships: Dating Preferences.
PUB DATE Aug 92
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (100th, Washington, DC, August 14-18, 1992).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Black Students; College Students; *Dating (Social); Higher Education; *Sex Differences
IDENTIFIERS *African Americans

ABSTRACT

Dating values are salient issues with regard to interpersonal relationships. They provide the basis for the relationship between two people that may help determine how the family will ultimately function. This study is a preliminary analysis that attempted to describe how dating preferences of African-Americans differ with respect to gender and with respect to traditional and non-traditional trait characterizations. African-American male (N=22) and African-American female (N=43) college students completed a questionnaire which assessed four dating preferences. A one-way MANOVA procedure found a gender effect with some associations to traditional standards. Many gender differences were found. Women were more likely to indicate the importance of earning potential than were men and women were more likely than men to believe that the mutual sharing of household duties is important; both of these choices fall into the traditional pattern. However, women were more likely than men to give importance to the non-traditional trait of sensitivity, while the difference for attractiveness was not significant. Overall, the findings from this preliminary study were not consistent with traditional standards. Thus, this research agreed with the literature suggesting that African-Americans have different dating preferences than does the general population. (ABL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED357296

African-American Interpersonal Relationships: Dating Preferences

Gina M. Lang,
Ivora D. Hinton,
Melvin N. Wilson

Department of Psychology

University of Virginia

Presented at the 1992 Convention of the
American Psychological Association

Washington, D.C. August, 1992

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CG024846

Running Head: Dating Preferences
Results of these analyses are preliminary.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Melvin N. Wilson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Abstract

This study is a preliminary analysis that attempts to describe gender's effect on the dating preferences of African-Americans with respect to traditional and non-traditional trait characterizations. Twenty-two African-American males and Forty-three African-American females completed a questionnaire to assess the four dating preferences examined. A one-way MANOVA procedure found a gender effect with some associations to traditional standards. Research on dating preferences has focused on White populations and the literature regarding the dating preferences of African-Americans has been inconsistent with regard to gender effects and traditional standards. More research on African-Americans needs to be conducted to make more conclusive statements regarding their dating preferences.

African-American Interpersonal Relationships:

Dating Preferences

Dating values are salient issues with regard to interpersonal relationships. They provide the basis for the relationship between two people that may, in turn, help determine how the family will ultimately function.

Previous Dating Studies

Most of the literature regarding dating involves studies that include White subject pools, and thus, reflects the dating patterns of that population. For example, Wallar (1937) performed a study regarding dating on predominantly a White college and observed what he termed as the "rating complex." He described this phenomenon as a competitive and materialistic rating of partners for dates that involves different traits for each sex.

Smith (1952) replicated Waller's study and included personality traits along with Waller's more materialistic traits. He found that many of Waller's traits were no longer relevant to White college students in the 1950's. Thus, even though Smith also used White participants, his findings are consistent with the notion that dating values vary according to the population.

Hansen and Hicks (1980) retested Waller's and Smith's studies and included African-Americans as subjects. However, they found no pattern of responses for the African-American subjects for the traits that they measured. It is possible that the particular traits measured may have been applicable only to the White population.

Rodgers-Rose (1980) studied African-American's preferences regarding someone with whom they were having an "intimate relationship." By permitting the subjects to list their own qualities, this study generated some preferences that were not identified in the other studies mentioned-- ie. honesty, understanding, and independence. Similarly, Anderson and Himes (1959) investigated dating patterns of students on a predominantly African-American college and found that some traits that were not included in the Hanson and to be important to African-Americans that were not included in the Hanson and Hicks study.

In addition, Bell, Bouie, and Baldwin (1990) analyzed Afrocentricity and African-American interpersonal relationships. They found a positive relationship between Afrocentric Cultural Consciousness and healthy African-American heterosexual relationships.

On the other hand, Fairchild (1985) reported findings that were contrary to the literature suggesting that African-Americans have different preferences in a date than do White Americans. He found that gender variability is common among African-American females and males with regard to mate selection and often conforms to traditional sex-role stereotypes. Thus, more research should be conducted to determine whether or not the dating preferences of African-Americans differ from that of the mainstream.

Sex-Role Values

The literature concerning the sex-role ideology of African-Americans has been varied and contradictory. For example, Malson (1983) reported that African-American women view their sex-role ideology as a synthesis of traditional and nontraditional

aspects. Hershey (1978) on the other hand, found evidence against the commonly held belief that African-American women are more androgynous than White women. Finally, Ransford and Miller (1983) reported differential results for different socioeconomic levels, with middle-class African-American females being found to have more traditional outlooks than those in the lower-class.

Several studies analyzed sex-role values and sex-typing among African-American males. Ransford and Miller (1983) reported that Black males were more traditional than White males. In addition, Lackey (1989) found African-American men to be more traditional in their values regarding the assignment of household chores to children. However, Cazenave (1983) studied the attitudes of middle-class African-American males and found them to be generally modern in their sex-role preferences regarding women. Yet, he also found that these preferences were mediated by the males's own social class and ethnic values, needs, and circumstances.

Sex-role attitudes play an important part in the development and maintenance of African-American relationships. Hence, research that clarified African-Americans feelings with regard to sex-role values would be valuable for dating research as well.

The Present Study

This study is a preliminary analysis that seeks to investigate the dating values of African-American people. It attempts to describe how dating preferences differ with respect to gender and with respect to traditional versus non-traditional trait characterizations.

Method

Subjects

65 African-American undergraduates (43 females and 22 males) from a mid-sized southeastern university participated in this study. They ranged in age from 18 years to 22 years. Subjects were given class credit for their participation.

Materials

The data for this study was collected along with data from a larger study that investigated dating values and family values of African-Americans. Subjects completed a questionnaire that listed 58 personal traits to assess their dating preferences. Subjects were to rate on a seven-point Likert scale how important it would be for a dating candidate to have this trait. The number one represented, "Not at all important" and the number seven represented, "Definitely must have this trait."

Four of the 58 traits were examined in this study. The first is considered to be a traditional trait for what a female looks for in a male, "Has earning potential;" the second is a non-traditional trait for what a female looks for in a male, "Is sensitive;" the third is a traditional trait for what a male looks for in a female, "Is generally considered to be attractive;" and the fourth is a non-traditional trait for what a male looks for in a female, "Believes in mutual sharing of household duties." The traditional characterizations for these traits are drawn from the sex role literature.

Results

A one-way MANOVA for the overall effect of gender on the four dating traits was found to be statistically significant ($F=4.78$ (4), $p< .01$) by the Wilk's Lambda

Criterion. Specifically, gender's affect on earning potential was found to be statistically significant ($F=4.90$ (1), $p<.05$) in that females found earning potential to be more important ($M=4.5$) than males ($M=3.5$) with regard to dating. There was also a significant effect for gender on the trait of sensitivity ($F=6.91$ (1), $p<.05$), with females ($M=5.6$) indicating that they think sensitivity is more important than do males ($M=4.7$). In addition, for the trait of believing in the mutual sharing of household duties, there was a statistically significant effect of gender ($F=6.41$ (1), $p<.05$). Namely, females ($M=4.3$) were found to give more importance to the belief in sharing household duties than did males ($M=3.1$). Table 1 reports the means for these significant univariate tests.

Insert Table 1 Here

Finally, although males ($M=5.1$) did indicate that attractiveness is more important than did females ($M=4.3$), there was no statistically significant difference between males and females regarding the trait of attractiveness.

Discussion

This research endeavor was a preliminary analysis that sought to describe gender effects with respect to dating choices among African-American males and females. The present data also offer associations regarding the traditional characterizations of the four dating traits studies.

Many gender differences were found. First of all, it was found that women were more likely to indicate the importance of earning potential than were men, which

typically thought of as traditional dating preference for females. In addition, women were more likely than men to believe that the mutual sharing of household duties is important; traditional standards would predict that males would not place much importance on this trait. Traditional standards also would have predicted males to indicate more importance for sensitivity and attractiveness than females. However, the present study found that women were more likely than men to give importance to the non-traditional trait of sensitivity and the difference for attractiveness was not significant.

Overall, the findings of this preliminary study are not consistent with traditional standards. Thus, this research agrees with the literature suggesting that African-Americans have different dating preferences than does the general population. Though the difference was not significant, it is interesting that the only trait with a higher mean for males than females was attractiveness. Perhaps more research in this area with a larger sample of males would address the attractiveness variable better. Also, the fact that this study found that females gave more importance to some traits than did males does not indicate that males believe these traits have no importance at all.

Finally, a study that compares the differences in the means of the four dating traits within gender would be necessary in order to make more conclusive statements regarding the traditional or nontraditional preferences of African-American people. In addition, studies that use more or different traditional and nontraditional dating traits would reinforce the soundness of the dating preference research for African-Americans.

References

Anderson, C. S. & Himes, J. S. (1959). Dating values and norms on a Negro college campus. Marriage and Family Living, 21, 227-229.

Bell, Y. R., Bouie, C. L., & Baldwin, J. A. (1990). Afrocentric cultural consciousness and African-American male-female relationships. Journal of Black Studies, 21, 162-189.

Cazenave, N. A. (1983). A woman's place: the attitudes of middle-class Black men. Phylon, 44, 12-32.

Fairchild, H. H. (1985). Black singles: gender differences in mate preferences and heterosexual attitudes. The Western Journal of Black Studies, 9, 69-73.

Hansen, S. L. (1980). Sex role attitudes and perceived dating-mating choices of youth. Adolescence, 15, 83-90.

Hershey, M. R. (1978). Racial differences in sex-role identities and sex stereotyping: evidence against a common assumption. Social Science Quarterly, 58, 582-596.

Lackey, P. N. (1989). Adults' attitudes about the assigning of household chores to male and female children. Sex Roles, 20, 271-281.

Malson, M. R. (1983). Black women's sex roles: the social context for a new ideology. Journal of Social Issues, 39, 101-113.

Ransford, H. E. & Miller, J. (1983). Race, sex and feminist outlooks. American Sociological Review, 48, 46-59.

Rodgers-Rose, L. (1980). Dialectics of Black male-female relationships. In L. Rodgers-Rose (Ed.), The Black Woman (pp. 251-263). Beverly Hills: Sage.

Smith, W. M. (1952). Rating and dating; a re-study. Marriage and Family Living, 14, 312-317.

Waller, W. (1937). The rating and dating complex. American Sociological Review, 2, 727-734.

Table 1: Dating Preferences that Attained Significant Gender Differences: Means of African-American Females and Males.

	Females	Males
Earning Potential	**4.5**	**3.5**

Sensitive	**5.6**	**4.7**
Belief in Sharing Duties	**4.3**	**3.1**